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ABSTRACT

The first section of the document consists of the questionnaire/survey instrument completed by 51 administrators as part of a study designed to evaluate the quality and efficiency of early education programs for handicapped children (ages 3-5) in Louisiana in 1985-86. The frequency distributions of the responses received are shown on the instrument. The second section is a narrative developed from interview data collected from 44 school principals or other school-level administrators during on-site visits to preschool handicapped programs. Administrator comments are noted on such topics as perceived roles and responsibilities in relation to the preschool program, communication between preschool and kindergarten teachers, and teacher burnout. (JW)

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STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN LOUISIANA 1985-86

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SUMMARY REPORT: ADMINISTRATORS

September 1986

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TO THE READER

This document is a product of the Statewide Evaluation of the Early Education Program for Handicapped Children in Louisiana, a study funded through a Cooperative Agreement between the U.S. Department of Education and the Louisiana State Department of Education. The evaluation represents a cooperative effort between the project staff in the Bureau of Evaluation, Office of Research and Development, and the program personnel of the Office for Special Educational Services in the Louisiana State Department of Education.

Information for this study was collected from personnel in the Louisiana Early Education Program at state and local levels between January 1, 1985, and June 30, 1986. Findings of this evaluation are based upon a multiple-model research design that included data collection during 39 program visits, 59 class observations, 570 surveys/questionnaires, 1,020 personal interviews with staff and parents, 303 class profiles, 606 individual student profiles, and more than 664 hours of on-site fieldwork. A comprehensive, technical report of these findings has been prepared for the primary audiences of this study.

Input from the field indicated to project staff that feedback was important to the contributors. Therefore, this document and other similar reports of the 17 service roles identified in the program have been prepared in response to this request. This document contains a copy of the survey/questionnaire instrument that was sent to the administrators or principals of the schools or centers housing the preschool program for completion, along with the frequency distributions of their responses. It should be noted that, unless otherwise indicated, all numbers are percentages of responses based on the 51 administrators who completed the instrument. Totals in excess of 100 percent are due to rounding.

The second section of this document is a narrative developed from data gathered in interviews with these administrators during the naturalistic study and the three waves of the evaluation.

Project staff are deeply appreciative of the time and effort contributed by the many people in the field without whom the study could not have been conducted. We hope that the information in this document will assist special education program personnel in providing the best program possible for handicapped preschoolers.

Betty N. Anderson

Betty N. Anderson, Project Director

JoAnn C. Bower

JoAnn C. Bower, Research Analyst

Preschool Handicapped Program Evaluation

Administrators

The Louisiana Department of Education has entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Office of Education to conduct a statewide study of the early education programs for handicapped children in Louisiana. The study is designed to provide program personnel and parents opportunities to showcase strengths and to suggest improvements for various program models. The study, which is NOT designed as a monitoring tool for compliance, will be a medium through which information about different program models can be disseminated. Areas of program models to be explored include, but are not limited to, the regular and related program services which are provided to children and parents, service delivery models, program formats, instructional models, physical facilities, staffing patterns, transportation, program processes, transitional efforts, interaction patterns, learning environment, staff training and experience, coordination across programs, program impact on participants and parents, and perceived benefits and difficulties of the program models.

The Bureau of Evaluation in the Office of Research and Development is conducting the study, with the cooperation of the Office of Special Educational Services. Information for the study will be collected from all school systems in the state with the assistance of each system's special education staff and the Louisiana Early Education Program coordinators. We would like to request your assistance in providing critical information about your preschool handicapped program for three- to five- year-old children. Your support and input are needed in this study, which has the potential to affect the quality of education in Louisiana. If you have any questions regarding the study or the information you are requested to provide, please feel free to call Dr. Betty Anderson or Dr. Jo Ann Bower at (504) 342-3835.

Please note: The identity of individuals, schools, and parishes will remain STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Please return this survey in the stamped, self-addressed envelope no later than December 15, 1985.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONSES

Number of responses = 51

_____/_____/_____/ 39 C 2 H 10 B 0 S

1. *How long have you been working with the preschool handicapped program as an administrator? (Include the current academic year.)*

   1 to 12 years

2. *What are your responsibilities in the program? (Check all for which you are responsible.)*

   22% Budgetary
   61% Teaching or instructional supervision
   86% Evaluation of the preschool teachers
   65% Parent liaison
   31% Agency liaison
   41% Coordination of program activities (referral, screening, evaluation, implementation of IEP)
   18% Other (What?): Administrator, principal

3. *Please indicate whether or not you have each of the certification or special training areas listed below. Also, please indicate how helpful each area is in administering your preschool handicapped program. (Check each area.)*

   1. Teacher certification: special education (47)
      40% have, helpful 2% have, not very helpful 57% do not have

   2. Teacher certification: elementary education (46)
      59% have, helpful 7% have, not very helpful 35% do not have

   3. Teacher certification: secondary education (45)
      38% have, helpful 20% have, not very helpful 42% do not have

   4. Administration certification: special school (45)
      36% have, helpful 2% have, not very helpful 62% do not have

   5. Administration certification: elementary education (43)
      84% have, helpful 5% have, not very helpful 12% do not have

   6. Administration certification: secondary education (42)
      43% have, helpful 14% have, not very helpful 43% do not have

   7. Certification: counseling (45)
      24% have, helpful 0% have, not very helpful 76% do not have

   8. Early childhood development degree (46)
      11% have, helpful 0% have, not very helpful 89% do not have

   9. Other: (11) Adult education, English supervision, Business
      91% have, helpful 0% have, not very helpful 9% do not have

4A. *What previous experience have you had in education? (Check all that apply.)*

35% Special education administrator
65% Elementary education administrator
31% Secondary education administrator
22% Special education teacher
59% Elementary education teacher
45% Secondary education teacher
12% Early childhood development worker
14% Counselor
0% No previous experience that has helped
18% Other: IEP specialist for Headstart, Adult education teacher, Business teacher, Economics degree

4B. *Write the number of the experience among those listed above that has helped you MOST in your role as administrator of a preschool handicapped program. For example, if your experience as a special education teacher has helped you most in your role as administrator of the preschool handicapped program, write "4" in the space provided.*

#1 = Elementary education administrator

5. *Based on your experiences, what are some of the things that happen to children as the result of their having received the services of the preschool handicapped program? (Check all that apply.)*

86% Children are more likely to be able to attend kindergarten in a regular school setting.
94% Children acquire self-help skills that make them more independent.
92% Children's self-esteem/self-confidence improves.
80% Children seem happier.
82% Children's behavior improves.
82% Children's speech improves.
80% Communication (receptive and expressive language) skills improve.
2% There are few or no effects from preschool handicapped services.
18% Other: Children may be mainstreamed at an earlier age. Social interaction with peers improves.

6. *How would you describe the coordination between the children's preschool handicapped teachers and the kindergarten teachers to whom the children may be assigned when they exit the preschool program? (Check the most appropriate.)*

31% The two groups work together on a regularly scheduled basis.
51% There is some informal communication between the two groups.
8% There is little or no regular communication between the two groups.
8% No children are assigned to kindergarten.
3% Other: The teachers work together. There is some formal communication to study and explain past IEPs, evaluations and skill areas.

7. *What are your concerns about the supply of qualified teachers, aides, and other ancillary staff (physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, adapted physical education teachers, nurses) for your program? (Check the answer that best matches your judgment.)*

31% Currently, there is an adequate supply of fully qualified program personnel.
11% There is an adequate supply, but qualifications are a concern.
36% There is not an adequate supply of available personnel, but those we have are fully qualified.
11% Both numbers and qualifications of available personnel are staffing problems.
6% There is a problem getting the required training for the aides.
6% Other: There is a great and growing need for more OTs, PTs, and speech therapists as one-half hour per week for most students is not enough.

8. *How has the presence of the preschool program affected the kindergarten program in your school? (Check all that apply.)*

37% More exceptional children are attending kindergarten in a regular school setting.
10% Additional staffing is needed in kindergarten as the result of increased enrollment of exceptional children.
33% Kindergarten teachers are more receptive to the idea of having special children in their classes.
6% Kindergarten teachers have difficulty accepting the additional burden of working with exceptional children in the regular classroom setting.
4% Kindergarten teachers have difficulty accepting some unique features of the preschool program, such as the pupil-teacher ratio, number of aides assigned to the preschool program, and the length of day.
24% There has been no observable effect on the kindergarten program.
29% This does not apply to our situation, because the preschoolers leave this school site to attend kindergarten at another site.
6% Other: Teachers of S/PH children have little interaction with kindergarten teachers. Students are transported by school bus to the kindergarten center when the need arises.

9. *In your opinion, how does the use of resources for the preschool handicapped program affect the availability of resources for other areas? (Check the answer that best matches your opinion.)*

54% It has no effect.
11% It reduces the resources available for other important areas.
35% It has increased the resources available for other areas.

10A. *What factors led to your system's participation in the preschool handicapped program? (Check all that apply.)*

67% Funding was available.
41% There was parental interest/demand.
51% Legal mandates required the program.
71% There was a desire to meet the needs of special children in the parish.

10B. *Write the number of the factor among those listed above that you believed as the MOST IMPORTANT factor in your system's having a preschool handicapped program.*

#1 = There was a desire to meet the needs of special children in the parish.

11. *Have you observed burnout in the teachers in the preschool handicapped program? (Check the most appropriate.)*

52% No, I have not observed any burnout.
35% Yes, I have observed burnout occasionally; usually, it has been temporary.
9% Yes, I have observed burnout at the end of the school year.
4% Yes, I have observed major, long-term burnout.

12A. *What factors do you believe cause burnout in the teachers in the preschool handicapped program? (Check all that apply.)*

43% Repeated assignment to the more involved severe/profound classes
35% Teachers' inability to "leave" these children, their needs, and their problems at school at day's end
12% Lack of opportunity for these teachers to meet as a group to share common concerns
20% Teaching in the extended-year program, as well as in the regular school program
39% Excessive amount of paperwork required for the program
10% Other: Lack of related service support due to Bulletin 1508 guidelines and the availability of related services personnel. Just the workload of caring for these children

12B. *Write the number of the factor among those listed above which is the PRIMARY FACTOR associated with burnout.*

#1 = Excessive amount of paperwork required for the program

(Note: Although 43% of the 51 administrators cited "Repeated assignment to the more involved severe/profound classes" as a factor that causes burnout, 32 administrators cited "Excessive amount of paperwork required for the program" as the primary factor.)

13A. What things do you believe might alleviate or prevent burnout in these teachers? (Check all that apply.)

41% Rotating assignments so that the same teachers are not always assigned to the more involved severe/profound classes
26% Special counseling to help teachers accept the children's needs and problems
41% Opportunities for teachers to attend conferences, workshops, etc., so that they can get updated knowledge, grow professionally, and develop fresh perspectives away from their usual environments
28% Release time for group sessions, during which teachers can discuss common concerns and offer one another support
47% Reduction in the amount of required paperwork
2% Nothing is needed to alleviate or prevent burnout.
6% Other: Time in schedule for staffing...change Bulletin 1508 guidelines to fit severe/profound population...splitting groups of children according to their handicapping conditions.

13B. Write the number of the item listed among those above that would be MOST LIKELY to alleviate of prevent teacher burnout.

#1 = Rotating assignments so that the same teachers are not always assigned to the more involved severe/profound classes AND opportunities for teachers to attend conferences, workshops, etc., so that they can get updated knowledge, grow professionally, and develop fresh perspectives away from their usual environments

14. Have you observed burnout in the aides who work in the preschool handicapped program? (Check the most appropriate.)

55% No, I have not observed any burnout.
43% Yes, I have observed burnout occasionally; usually, it has been temporary.
2% Yes, I have observed burnout at the end of the school year.
0% Yes, I have observed major, long-term burnout.

15A. *In your opinion, what are the primary benefits parents and children receive from the preschool handicapped program? (Check all the benefits you feel they are receiving.)*

90% Children acquire self-help skills and become more independent.
84% Children who are developmentally delayed have an opportunity to "catch up."
78% Some children who receive program services and attend kindergarten in a regular school setting could not have done so without the preschool handicapped program.
84% Children demonstrate gains in the cognitive domain.
92% Children demonstrate gains in the social domain.
90% Children demonstrate gains in the motor domain.
77% There is a reduction of parents' tension or stress once they realize the program provides someone/something to help their exceptional children.
73% Parents tend to acquire more acceptance of their children's exceptionalities.
82% Parents learn to have more realistic expectations for their exceptional children.
63% Parents are sometimes freed, so that they can do routine things like shopping or, in some cases, seeking employment.
67% There is more acceptance of exceptional children by regular education teachers and students in the school setting.
61% There is more community acceptance of exceptional children.
4% I can see no benefits from this program.
2% Other: The overall benefits are tremendous.

15B. *Write the number of the benefit listed among those listed above which is the MOST IMPORTANT.*

#1 = Children acquire self-help skills and become more independent.

16A. What difficulties have you observed in the preschool handicapped program? (Check all the difficulties you have observed.)

28% There are difficulties in securing and keeping an adequate number of teachers and other program staff.
35% There are difficulties in finding qualified or trained staff.
18% Funding is not adequate.
12% There are difficulties in finding children who are potential qualifiers for the program.
24% There are difficulties in assessing children referred for services.
2% Teachers have difficulty in transporting materials to home-based settings.
39% Medical evaluations frequently delay the assessment process.
12% Medical evaluations are difficult to interpret.
26% Parents are less involved than they should be.
22% There are inadequate curricular materials available for use with low-functioning children.
16% Materials/supplies are inadequate.
8% The method of transporting students is unsatisfactory.
26% Students spend too much time traveling to and from school.
4% Program staff experience burnout.
12% Physical facilities are not adequate for these children.
12% The physical facilities are not located in a setting that permits integration of preschool handicapped children and regular children.
26% Ancillary staff (therapists, adapted physical education teacher, nurse) do not have appropriate working space.
20% There should be more or better coordination between related agencies (health unit, etc.) and program personnel.
18% There should be more or better coordination among the personnel who provide different services within the program (teacher, therapists, adapted physical education teacher, assessment team members).
31% It is difficult to secure special services like physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc.
10% There are problems in integrating the exceptional children and the regular children.
8% The quality of instructional services provided during the extended-year (summer) program is not on par with that provided during the regular year.
20% There are difficulties documenting regression in order to determine children's eligibility for the extended-year program.
18% The extended-year program denies some staff and children the opportunity for a needed break.
10% There are difficulties in interpretation of/compliance with 1508 guidelines. Please indicate the specific areas in which these occur: Speech therapy guidelines are not adequate for this population.

(Continued on following page)

14% Other: Such varied handicaps in one setting...range from speech delay to severe and profound speech handicaps

16B. Write the number of the difficulty among those listed on the preceding page that causes you MOST CONCERN.

#1 = There are difficulties in securing and keeping an adequate number of teachers and other program staff.

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Being cognizant of your heavy workload and hectic schedule, our staff would like to extend our special thanks to you for participating in this study. We cannot overemphasize the contribution you have made to the study by supplying the requested information about your preschool handicapped program.

If there are unique features, strengths, or weaknesses of your program that have not been addressed in this questionnaire, please comment in the space provided below. Also, please feel free to comment on any item on the questionnaire.

Let us once again encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to share suggestions or concerns about the preschool handicapped program. Confidentiality is assured. Your time in providing this additional, valuable information is appreciated.

Strengths: *Dedicated Staff...Parental Involvement*
The accomplishments of some of the children are remarkable. The program provides a source of help for parents. Children are receiving services at an early age.

Suggestions for improvements: *Limit the time children spend on the bus.* More involvement with the medical community is needed. Provide more full-time related service personnel. Group children according to their handicaps. Eliminate some of the more demanding regulations. Provide funds for community-based programs.

Unique areas: Regular and handicapped preschoolers are housed on the same campus. Children who were formerly in institutions can now receive an education in a regular school. Regular students become role models for these special students. Early childhood screening clinics at local hospitals identify children needing help at an early age.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your assistance in this project.

STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF THE EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN LOUISIANA

Interview Data Summary: Administrators

prepared by

Betty N. Anderson and JoAnn C. Bower

This report is a summary of interview data collected from 44 school principals or other school-level administrators during the on-site visits to the preschool programs for handicapped children during the naturalistic study and the three separate waves of the evaluation. These administrators provided insights into their role in and responsibility for the program, their perceptions of the effects of the program, and their concerns as to the effect of this program on the instructional program for all children in their school.

Role and Responsibility of the Administrator

Generally the school principals indicated that their primary responsibilities were administrative, that is, supervising and evaluating teacher performance, coordinating this program with other programs in the school, supervising lunch schedules and bus duty assignments, and sometimes hiring the teachers and teacher aides. One administrator reported, "I have to see that the teacher has her lesson plans and carries them out..and that the IEPs are done. I also make sure food and transportation are taken care of." One principal indicated that he often counsels parents

who are concerned about the safety of their young child on a school campus with older children.

In three separate programs, the evaluators noted that the principal's primary assignment was to a school other than the preschool site, and the administrative duties at the school housing the preschool program were assumed by an assistant principal or a type of "administrative coordinator." Though the principal's duties were divided between the two schools, it was indicated that the handicapped preschoolers were getting full program services and were often included in special fieldtrips, movies, etc. that were held on the regular school campus.

Effects of the Program on Children

When asked to identify some of the things that they had actually seen happen to children in the preschool program, administrators cited the following:

- Some handicapped children are able to enter kindergarten in a regular setting following their experiences in the preschool program.
- Handicapped children acquire self-help skills that make them more independent.
- The behavior of young handicapped children enrolled in the program improves.
- The language and speech of the children improves as the apparent result of receiving program services.

- One principal noted that, in addition to these apparent results, the "overall general health of the children improves."

Another principal noted that these children, by participating in the preschool handicapped program, get an opportunity to "grow up like regular kids grow up." He went on to say that the children would probably get the same kind of thing in kindergarten, but that the preschool handicapped children would probably have to repeat kindergarten if they did not attend the preschool handicapped program. Noting that some of these children might not ever make it into a regular class, he still indicated his desire to see the prekindergarten intervention continued.

One administrator said that he had 30 years of experience that was education-related, and that he was the first administrator in his area to have orthopedically handicapped classes, mentally retarded classes, and classes for the deaf on a regular school campus. He noted that not only the degree of acceptance toward the program, staff, and children had changed, but also the attitude of the parents of the handicapped preschoolers. He said that in the beginning the parents were characterized by a certain hostility that went hand in hand with their belief that in order to get services for their children, they had to fight for them and constantly make demands. Now, he noted, the parents are more secure with the knowledge that the

program services are in place.

Effects on the Overall School Program

Most of the principals reported that the preschool program for handicapped children had little or no effect on the overall school program. One principal expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for the program and acknowledged that his enthusiasm was due, in part, to having a son who is a product of the program. He reported that he requested that the class be placed at his school because he believes that it is the best school for the preschool program for the handicapped. Furthermore, he indicated that he doesn't like to see any children going outside his community to obtain services that need to be provided in the local school community. "We're going to have these kinds of children, and the schools must serve them and their parents." He further advised that schools starting a preschool program for handicapped children select the teachers with great care as "they must love handicapped children, too, just as much as normal children."

In another situation, the principal reported that there was much hostility by the regular teachers in the school toward the preschool program during the first year that the class was established. The teachers complained that the children were noisy and that they cried and disturbed the quiet operation of the regular classes. In the second year of the program, the preschoolers were moved to a separate wing of the school that was

converted for use by the preschool class. The principal further reported that it has been five years since the preschool program began, and the attitude of the teachers and students in the regular classes now is positive, cooperative, and pleasant toward the preschoolers. He said that many of the older children assist the preschoolers who use walkers or are in wheelchairs.

Generally speaking, the administrators felt they were on pretty solid ground in reference to the availability and qualifications of teachers, aides, and other ancillary staff for the preschool handicapped program. Some comments were shared, however, that indicate areas of concern. One administrator indicated that the teachers of preschool handicapped children are difficult to replace. Noting that his program had changed from home-based to center-based, he said that he has one teacher working in the preschool handicapped program who wants to change to regular kindergarten.

Another administrator, indicating his satisfaction with current staff availability and qualifications, noted that many of her teachers had come from the ranks of speech therapists. This same administrator went on to say that she had an abundance of applications for the aide positions.

Communication with Kindergarten Teachers

One area discussed with the administrators was the level of communication between the teachers working in the preschool

handicapped program and the kindergarten teachers who receive some "graduates" of the program in their classes. Three administrators indicated that there is close communication to ensure a smooth transition. One of these administrators went on to say that the fact that the preschool handicapped program is on the K-4 campus facilitates the communication. Another remarked that he schedules the preschool and kindergarten recess periods at the same time with the intention of giving the preschool teachers and the kindergarten teachers an opportunity to communicate on a regular basis. Another administrator said the key to the smooth transition is to find a kindergarten teacher who likes "these kids" and can work with them. Generally, what happens is that the preschool teacher calls the parent when the teacher feels that a child is ready to move into kindergarten or to be mainstreamed into kindergarten. If the parent agrees with the teacher's suggestion, the teacher contacts the principal, who checks with the kindergarten teachers regarding enrollment, appropriate placement, etc. When a kindergarten teacher is selected, she, the preschool teacher, and the parents confer and plan the transition. The administrator said that the kindergarten teachers are accustomed to this arrangement, and children are moved in and out throughout the school year.

Comments Expressed by Administrators

The following comments recorded during the on-site interviews

are indicative of the concerns expressed by school administrators about the preschool program for handicapped children.

> We don't get too many handicapped kids showing up for kindergarten (as a first school experience)...People in this area know about the preschool program...The school board used what space they had...It takes some of my time--less now because it's better organized...The special education teachers do their job, handle their own problems, and that makes my job a lot easier...These kids need help from someone--it just as well be me...Some teachers remark that they wish they had materials, aides, like the preschool teachers.

One administrator said that he believes the acceptance of the preschool program has been mixed. Some teachers in the regular program think the money could be better used elsewhere. When asked what advice he could offer to others who were beginning the program in their schools, he replied that a comprehensive orientation for the faculty would assist them in understanding the goals of the program and in overcoming their fear of working with these handicapped children.

The issue of teacher burnout surfaced during the second wave and was discussed by one of the administrators interviewed by the evaluators. He acknowledged that he had observed some occasional burnout, but he went on to say that it tended to come and go and

generally was not long-term. The administrator indicated that he felt the opportunities and demands that are placed on service personnel are often challenging and fun, but sometimes burdensome. When asked about what things might alleviate burnout in the teachers working in the preschool handicapped classes, he responded with two solutions: (1) the opportunity to get away from the teaching environment and attend conferences, etc., which provide fresh perspectives and knowledge updates, and (2) the opportunity to do training, professional writing, and research.

Other comments relative to program benefits that the administrators shared with the evaluators are the following:

- The kids get attention they wouldn't get without the preschool program...Parents can't afford it...and they aren't trained like the teachers...I don't see as much parent hostility as initially...Their sense of being cheated has diminished as program services have become established.
- (Benefits include) acquisition of school-appropriate behaviors and improved speech...You see tremendous changes between the beginning and end of the year...Some have no language at the beginning of the year.
- Trainees in allied health/human services have an opportunity to observe/participate in a quality early education program.

- A recent parent survey conducted at our school included several comments about how good the preschool program was...I thought they came from parents of preschoolers.
- It does my heart good...I was watching the teacher signing to the preschoolers and almost forgot what I was saying just thinking about how far we've come...Every kid in Louisiana should have a similar opportunity.

One administrator remarked that if more classroom space were available to house regular preschoolers, it would allow the introduction of normal peers into the instructional setting. He also noted that currently there is no formal evaluation of either child gain or the effects of parental participation. He shared the following with the evaluators:

> We are working toward an approximation of a transdiciplinary model with the special educator and speech therapist as co-teachers. We hope to eventually have the OT as a team member who instructs in the classroom as well. We anticipate that more integration of activities/objectives and better team communication will result.